

**Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of)	
)	
Structure and Practice of the Video Relay Service Program)	CG Docket No. 10-51
)	
Telecommunications Relay Services and Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities)	CG Docket No. 03-123
)	

**REPLY COMMENTS OF CONSUMER GROUPS
ON NOTICE OF INQUIRY AND
FURTHER NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING**

Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc.; National Association of the Deaf; California Coalition of Agencies Serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network; Cerebral Palsy and Deaf Organization; and Deaf Seniors of America (collectively “Consumer Groups”) submit these brief reply comments in response to initial comments filed on the service quality metrics and certain other issues.

I. NOTICE OF INQUIRY ON SERVICE QUALITY METRIC FOR VRS

A. VRS PERFORMANCE GOALS AND MEASURES

The Consumer Groups reiterate that performance goals and metrics are integral to achieving functional equivalency and functional equivalency demands that VRS, like traditional telecommunications services, have performance metrics. The Consumer Groups disagree that because performance metrics will be “extremely difficult to measure” and develop, the

Commission should rely on market forces to ensure VRS provider performance.¹ The Commission cannot rely on market forces to improve VRS performance. Interpreter translations from the message conveyed in sign language to giving information in English by voice must be the primary component of VRS metrics. Only after performance metrics are developed on a collaborative basis and put in place will VRS providers achieve a higher level of service with less misinterpretation of/repeated efforts to clarify calls handled via VRS.

Although improved service quality could result in a higher per minute cost for VRS service, better performance should result in more efficient calls because the Communications Assistant (“CA”) will convey each side of the conversation accurately the first time, rather than having to clarify or repeat portions of the conversation that are poorly translated between voice and American Sign Language (“ASL”). Better performance should result in fewer minutes spent on an average VRS call which could offset any higher per-minute cost. In short, improvements in performance may ultimately lead to cost benefits for VRS providers and the TRS Fund.

B. PHONY VRS CALLS

The Consumer Groups reiterate that no legitimate VRS call should be blocked or denied. To avoid such a situation, the Consumer Groups suggested that the Commission narrowly define harassing and other “phony calls” and establish procedures on how such calls should be handled by CAs and VRS providers while maintaining the call confidentiality rule. The Consumer Groups do not support broad CA discretion to report end users to law enforcement. The Commission should not condone a slippery slope when it comes to maintaining the confidentiality of the content of VRS calls.

¹ Comments of Sorenson Communications, LLC Regarding Part III and Sections IV.C-E and G-H of the Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, CG Docket No. 10-51 and CG Docket No. 03-123 at 2 (filed May 30, 2017) (“Sorenson Comments”).

II. FURTHER NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING

A. VRS USE OF ENTERPRISE AND PUBLIC VIDEOPHONE

One VRS provider suggested that each VRS user submit a picture to her service provider, who would visually authenticate the end user every time she makes a call from a public video phone.² The Consumer Groups oppose this proposal because it is not functionally equivalent. If the user of a public phone gives her ten-digit VP number each time she uses a public videophone, that should suffice. Hearing people do not have to provide pictures to their service providers to use a public phone and neither should VRS users.

B. DIRECT VIDEO CALLING CUSTOMER SUPPORT SERVICES

The Consumer Groups supported amending section 64.613 of the Commission's rules to allow all providers of direct video calling customer support services to access the TRS Numbering Directory (not just VTCSecure) so long as the Commission ensures that the direct connections are an option to consumers without replacing VRS. The Consumer Groups suggested that the Commission amend its rules so that all providers of direct video calling customer support services may only add a direct video calling customer service number to the TRS Directory if such number (1) offers consumers the option of choosing direct video calling or VRS or (2) is dedicated to a direct video line and separate from the company's customer service number for the general public. Others agreed with Consumer Groups' position³ and we urge the Commission to take such action to ensure customer choice to connect to customer service

² Comments of ASL Services Holdings, LLC d/b/a GlobalVRS to Notice of Inquiry on Service [sic] Quality Metrics for VRS, Part III and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking Sections IV.C-E and G-H, CG Docket No. 10-51 and CG Docket No. 03-123 at 9 (filed May 30, 2017).

³ Sorenson Comments at 24; *See also* Communication Service for the Deaf, Inc's Comments to the Commission's Report and Order, Notice of Inquiry, Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and Order, Docket No. 03-123 and CG Docket No. 10-51 at 2-3 (filed May 30, 2017).

representatives via VRS with a video relay interpreter or to place a DVC call with an ASL-fluent customer service representative.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ *Claude L. Stout*

Claude L. Stout, Executive Director
Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of
Hearing, Inc.
8630 Fenton Street, Suite 121
Silver Spring, MD 20910
cstout@TDIforAccess.org

Howard Rosenblum, Chief Executive Officer
Zainab Alkebsi, Policy Counsel
National Association of the Deaf (NAD)
8630 Fenton Street, Suite 820
Silver Spring, MD 20910
howard.rosenblum@nad.org
zainab.alkebsi@nad.org

Sheri Farinha, Chair
California Coalition of Agencies Serving the
Deaf and Hard of Hearing
4708 Roseville Road, Suite 111
North Highlands, CA 95660
sfarinha@norcalcenter.org

Tom Dowling, Treasurer
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer
Advocacy Network (DHHCAN)
4618 Tapestry Drive
Fairfax, VA 22032-3617
dowlingt@cox.net

Mark Hill, President
Cerebral Palsy and Deaf Organization
12025 SE Pine Street, Apt. #302
Portland, OR 97216
president@cpado.org

Nancy B. Rarus, President
Deaf Seniors of America
5619 Ainsley Court
Boynton Beach, FL 33437
nbrarus1@verizon.net

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